

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 21, 2004**

Members Present: Hastings, Thompson, Carroll, Ennis, Harden, Kitson, Lardizzone, Magner, Morris, Wasson and Webb

Members Excused: Newstadt, Phillips and Timberman

Guests: Jack Houck (DEL VETS), Ed Moczulski (LP Lo-DEL), Tom Daws and Ralph Hoag (VVA), Gloria Homer (DAS), Al Carter (SOS)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Flag.

Chairman Hastings reports he has distributed some tax information and Tom Ciccarello will be at our January meeting to talk about various tax programs.

DAS VETERANS HOME UPDATE

Ms. Homer reports project on time and on budget, even with the additional 100 sq ft. added to the original space. Received commitment letter from VA, can start getting money when we meet required criteria. January 13, 2005, will advertise RFP with design build team. February 15, 2005, proposals due from design build firm, pre-qualified design firm, puts us ahead of schedule. March 15, 2005, negotiate with design firm team, should have completed negotiations to write up contract. Will decide on a design build team, amount of money will be in packet, then sign memorandum of agreement with the federal Veterans Administration. Then we will start getting money from federal government on a reimbursement basis, with promises of reimbursement turn-around in 48 hours. In order to get the 65% match on the funds collected, the monies have to be available by March 1, 2005. We will negotiate the items that the donated money will pay for with the design build team, so that can be part of the contract. Donated monies are put together with State money for 65% matching and will be spent as designated by the donators. The Steering Committee will advise the Department of Administrative Services on how that money is to be spent. Contributions after March 1, 2005, may not be matched by federal government. City of Milford decided to go with the OC zoning to allow the Boys and Girls Club on the site. City of Milford would like a prioritized listing of proposed names of roads and they will name according to that list. The public hearing for the rezoning of the entire park is tentatively scheduled for January 24, 2005, Milford City Hall.

Chairman Hastings reports that Al Carter from the SOS contacted a professional fundraiser, with the objective of raising as much money as possible by the March deadline.

Mr. Holloway reports that they sent a package of plans and elevations to Washington. They reviewed the plans and asked that they be revised. They felt there might be operational issues in the way the core spaces were laid out and in having a centralized nurse station; they want to see satellite nurse stations. In a meeting with Heery, it came out that they over estimated in the original estimate and will hopefully balance out with the extra square footage. He asked for results from canvassing of veterans groups in reference to their preference of the style for the facility and the general consensus from the Commissioners was for #2. Mr. Holloway responds to a question of having a scale of the Home by suggesting they could computer generate various models in cyberspace and create images. Commissioner Carroll questions if we will have the same kind of computer and fax set-up as at the Christiana Hospital. Mr. Holloway confirms that their intent is to have "state of the art" information technology for this building. Commissioner Lardizzone questions if the VAC system will be computer controlled and Mr. Holloway confirms that it will be. Commissioner Kitson questions if the Steering Committee has talked to DTI about connections to the State network and Mr. Holloway confirms that they have already met with DTI.

Mr. Moczulski states there is a rumor that Home of the Brave is moving. Property surrounding Home of the Brave has been purchased by an owner and developer. Home of the Brave will not leave current site unless something is worked out where they can transfer the veterans and it is an upgrade situation.

Chairman Hastings asked for corrections to November minutes. Commissioner Carroll gives corrections as: page 2, line 16, town should be Veterans Home, page 18, 1st large paragraph from the bottom, not listed as chair to committee, and on the last page, it should state parliamentary.

MOTION BY HARDEN TO ACCEPT NOVEMBER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES WITH CORRECTIONS AS NOTED, SECONDED BY CARROLL, MOTION CARRIED.

Chairman Hastings states that what we have been publishing is a journal, as distinguished from true minutes. We need to start publishing minutes, which would generally not be more than a page or two. Journals should be internal to the organization, and minutes are subject to subpoena, and we need to separate the two. Someone on the Commission needs to be designated to serve as the recording secretary, to record motions made, exact wording and outcome.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Commissioner Kitson reports the Southern Cemetery had a meeting on November 30, 2004. There were three civilian members, himself, Davila, Newstadt, and Jones in attendance. There were no complaints. The next meeting will be in February 2005. Commissioner Harden states that there has not been a Cemetery Committee meeting in over a year. Chairman Hastings reports the Northern Cemetery Family Advisory Committee is meeting on January 24, 2005, 7:00 PM, and suggests they meet then and kill two birds with one stone. Commissioner Morris suggests that when Newstadt gets back, parameters can be set up for those meetings.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS & FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner Carroll reports they had an update this morning and things are going quite well.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Commissioner Lardizzone reports they are working with Tony Davila in trying to submit a request to the Bond Bill Committee to get a bus for the new Veterans Home. They are talking to Representative Bruce Ennis in regards to who is going to have control of the Home. Commissioner Morris reports he made recommendations that the State of Delaware consider legislation that would allow approved veterans organizations to receive a free pass at the Delaware State toll road for the purpose of transporting veterans to and from medical facilities. Would also like to request an increase of the pension exemption that is currently set at \$2,000 for retired military veterans up to the age of 60, as established on line 32 of the current state tax documents. Also, consider further review of the full exemption of military pay and/or disability pay for exclusion. Would like to request that the State of Delaware join the Pentagon and increase its amber rating to green for in-state tuition offered to some military families stationed in Delaware as a result of military service. So the military member may be eligible for in-state tuition for both their state of legal residency and the state in which they are assigned.

PERSONNEL

Commissioner Lardizzone reports that the position at the Southern Cemetery has been advertised and they are waiting for a cert list. Chairman Hastings states that as soon as a person has been selected for the position of administrator for the Veterans Home, then a group will be put together to decide the rules for admissions and priorities.

GROUNDBREAKING & DEDICATION

Commissioner Morris reports he has found a site to order the shovels and possibly pins to give at the groundbreaking. Chairman Hastings states that the May timeframe still looks good for groundbreaking and the road should be done by then.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

Commissioner Kitson states no meetings have been scheduled yet. He will start taking pictures after the first of the year.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Wasson (DELVETS) – Army band function at the Grand Theater on December 7, 2004, received favorable comments.

Harden (WAVES Nat'l) – Voted on design of the Home and discussed dedication of their 7th stained window at Coast Guard Station in Cape May, NJ.

Webb (VVA) – VVA Chapter 83 will have a Christmas vigil on Christmas Eve at 7:00PM, at the monument in Wilmington.

Kitson (VFW) – The next big event: Red, White & Blue Gala.

Thompson (MCL) – Toys for Tots is winding down, made quota.

Morris (American Legion) – We were contacted about a veteran in need of fuel and the State Commander is in the process of making sure he gets fuel for the winter. We were contacted by a trucker about a stranded veteran and we are making arrangements to get him home. We are pushing a program to help service members stay in touch with issues affecting them and their families by encouraging local cable channels to carry a pentagon channel, which is free of charge to all involved.

MOTION BY MORRIS THAT OUR COMMISSION SEND A LETTER TO OUR CABLE PROVIDERS TO REQUEST THE PENTAGON CHANNEL FOR THIS STATE TO BE AVAILABLE FOR THE VETERAN POPULOUS, SECONDED BY KITSON, MOTION CARRIED.

Carroll (MOPH) – Letter sent by acting director of the VA stating there have been additional parking spaces paved and lined off behind the medical center, adjacent to the entrance. That letter comes from speaking with Spera at the last meeting. January tax deduction for auto donations has changed; person can no longer claim Kelly Blue Book value for the auto, but the deduction will be what the non-profit organization receives from the sale of the vehicle.

Magner (AMVETS) – December 4, 2005, AMVETS had first Department meeting. December 7, Post 1183 President Al Lawler and member Magner attended National Guard concert in Wilmington and presented check for \$1,250 to Chairman Vavala for the National Guard family emergency relief fund.

Ennis (KWVA) – December 3, 2004, attended KWVA social, and December 10, 2004, attended KWVA Department council meeting, gave Home update, received approval of Victorian design and solicited names of streets for Home. December 11, 2004, attended Chapter 1 KWVA social and gave Home update. December 18, 2004, was guest of Mid Atlantic Base Sub Vets annual meeting, gave Home update, and solicited names for streets.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Harden reports that the VA Hospital Salute to Hospitalized Veterans week is starting Sunday, February 13, 2005. Hope to have Philly Fanatic on Wednesday, February 16, 2005. WAVES group is entertaining that afternoon and the American Legion will have all day on Monday, February 14, 2005. Commissioner Morris asks if there is a deadline for submission of street names and Commissioner Harden states that it is the next meeting. Chairman Hastings informs that time will be spent next meeting to review Carroll's committee report and put together letter to Milford City Council with list of recommended names. He would like to send letter and attend City Council meeting for further discussion.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Hastings reports that Secretary Principi has offered his resignation; the new nominee is Ambassador Jim Nicholson. He has invited Larry Pelkey to January meeting to share experiences in Iraq. Chairman Hastings handed out *Roberts Rules* to cover basics of parliamentary procedures.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 25, 2005 (11:00 AM)

**LOCATION: Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED